DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 387 251 PS 023 602

AUTHOR Sandhu, Malathi
TITLE Nannies Touching the Future.
PUB DATE 23 Jun 95
NOTE 10p.; Keynote address presented at the Annual Conference of the International Nanny Association (10th, Scottsdale, AZ, June 22-25, 1995).
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Viewpoints (Opinion/Position Papers, Essays, etc.) (120)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Caregiver Child Relationship; *Caregiver Role; *Child Caregivers; *Child Care Occupations; Child Rearing; Elementary School Students; Empathy; Infant Care; Infants; Interpersonal Relationship; Parent Attitudes; Parent Role; Parents; *Preschool Children; Professional Training; Standards
IDENTIFIERS Caregiver Behavior; *Nannies

ABSTRACT

As people who "stand-in" for parents, nannies shape children. The child-caregiver relationship involves respect for the child's potential and individuality. Working with children, a nanny plays many roles: parent surrogate, primary caregiver, and one who shapes the development of the whole child and the child's moral and aesthetic values. In these roles, nannies actively and significantly influence a child's socialization. A nanny bears responsibilities such as creating a positive emotional climate in the home and providing caregiving that meets the child's needs. Characteristics of a primary caregiver which will facilitate optimal child development include: (1) genuineness; (2) consistency; (3) reasonableness; (4) warmth; (5) empathy; and (6) trustful confidence in the child's desire to do what is right. Appropriate goals of care include: (1) growth of child's independence and competence; (2) development of the physical, emotional, motor, intellectual, and social aspects of the whole child; (3) development of self-control; (4) development of prosocial qualities; and (5) facilitation of the child's happiness and self-confidence. To achieve all these characteristics and goals, nannies need to be sensitive to a family's expectations and values, parents must be willing to share the child with the nanny, and nanny educators need to work to develop professional standards. (JW)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
X This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

Nannies Touching the Future

Malathi Sandhu

Keynote Address--International Nanny Association
10th. Annual Conference
June 23, 1995

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
Malathi K. Sandhu
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

ED 387 251

It was the eminent psychoanalyst Carl Gustav Jung who said,

"We reach backward to our parents and forward to our children and through their children to a future we will never see, but about which we need to care."

He is describing the role of parents and persons such as nannies who stand in for parents in their absence. These are people who influence and shape the child and, in the process, reach far into the future.

The great American poet Walt Whitman in his poem titled *There Was A Child Went Forth* perceptively described how children's lives are impacted, both in the short and long term, by their experiences. I am going to quote parts of this poem to you. He says:

There was a child went forth every day,
And the first object he looked upon and received with wonder or pity or love or dread, that object he became,
And that object became part of him for the day or a certain part of the day....or for many years or stretching cycles of years.
The early lilacs....
And grass....
And the March-born lambs....
And the field sprouts of April and May....
And the old drunkard.....
And the schoolmistress....
His own parents....
The blow, the quick loud word....
Affection that will not be gainsayed.... The sense of what is real....the thought if after all it should prove unreal,
The doubts of daytime and the doubts of nighttime....the curious whether and how,....
These became part of the child who went forth everyday, and who now goes and will always go forth everyday.

When one stands in relationship to another, especially a malleable and vulnerable child, one has assumed an awesome responsibility. A responsibility for creating the future. Because, a child absorbs the lessons of his or her own life and gives the same back as an adult.

But children are not inert masses of clay to be shaped passively by adults. Rather I would like to portray the caregiver-child relationship as one resembling that of the sculptor facing a block of alabaster. The skillful artist knows that you cannot simply start working on the block with chisel and pick and drill. Rather, as did Michelangelo

PS 023602

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

when creating the enduringly beautiful and larger-than-life statue of David, the sculptor studies the grain of the stone, its density, the crystalline structure, the luminescence of different parts of the block, its grooves and indentations, and the natural qualities of each type of stone before starting the process of sculpting it. The skilled artist may select a piece of stone with an end product in mind, but just as often, the stone is acquired without a final product in mind. Then, as a Hopi Indian artist friend recently told me in response to my question of how he decides what the final piece will be--whether it is to be a kachina, human figure, or a ceremonial bowl--he studies the block, sometimes he dreams about it, and eventually as he stated it, he frees from the stone the piece that is already contained within it. We should deal with children who are in our care with such respect and reverence for the potentials carried within the child and the uniqueness of each child.

I will speak during the course of this talk to the four main groups represented in this audience--nannies, parents, agency owners, and nanny educators.

The following quote is taken from the INA definitions of in-home caregivers: " Nannies are employed by the family on either a live-in or live-out basis to undertake all tasks related to the care of children.....A nanny's work week ranges from 40 to 60 hours per week. She or he usually works unsupervised." The INA Membership Fact Sheet adds that most (81%) work more than 42 hours per week, 53% work at least 60 hours per week and 95% work five days a week. Also from the INA membership fact sheet, 76% of nannies care for 1 to 2 children and 90% of these children fall into the newborn to 5 year old age range.

By definition then, a nanny plays many and significant **roles** in a child's life. It takes a very special person to play these roles skillfully, knowledgeably, and with the well-being of the child at heart. What are these roles? A nanny is a *parent surrogate.* A nanny is a *primary caregiver.* A nanny *facilitates the development of the whole child* -- and shapes the physical, intellectual, social and emotional selves of the child. A nanny also *shapes the child's moral and aesthetic values.* In short, a nanny *socializes* a child.

Socialization is the process by which children acquire the behaviors, habits, expectations, skills, and standards that the family and social group value in the adult. Parents are a child's primary socialization forces, but nannies are a close second to parents. One could say, that with parents and other family members, nannies co-create the adult of the future, and therefore, the future itself.

The nanny does this by how she or he stands in relationship with the child, and by *creating an emotional climate* in the home wherein the child feels secure and valued, and wants to grow and stretch. And, become a mature, fully functioning adult.

When a nanny shares with the parent the child-rearing function she or he can only be successful if the child creates a *new social attachment* -- to the nanny. Research has indicated that socialization is founded upon a child's social and emotional bond with the socializing agent. Without attachment, a child is merely in custodial care, and simply learns situational rules and expectations. That is, the child simply learns to do what he or she must do to get approval and to avoid disapproval. Sensitive, warm, consistent relationships with a powerful adult form the foundation of the attachment bond. In this context, a child learns to expect care and learns that when a person is in need, another will respond empathically. These early childhood experiences serve as the basis for constructing subsequent relationships and color the child's beliefs about the relative safety and/or dangerousness of the world outside the home. They also influence the child's sense of self as lovable.

Sensitive caregiving is also characterized by *synchrony*, or a good fit between between caregiver behavior and child behavior. A complementing of behaviors including verbal and social responses in even the youngest of infants. Especially with infants, *synchrony* in caregiving has been described as a subtle and intricate dance that occurs between caregiver and child. This type of relationship presumes that the caregiver is attentive and responsive to the child, makes eye contact, and verbalizes when with the very young child. Even young infants are attentive to the actions and verbalizations of caregivers, and also to even more subtle cues such as the body tensions of the caregiver. A responsive adult caregiver is relaxed, observant, and uses touch, vocalization and changes in body posture in response to even the smallest shifts and subtlest nuances of child behavior. The quality of the caregiver-child relationship will determine whether a baby will attach to the caregiver and consequently develop a sense of trust in the caregiver, trust in the physical world of objects, and ultimately trust in self as capable of evoking positive and need fulfilling overtures from others. A child's entire future orientation to the world of people and things hinges on the nature of these early relationships. Psychoanlaysts like Erik Erikson say that the core of the child's ego or personality is molded by these early interactions with significant adults.

Responsiveness to a child's needs on the part of caregivers also has implications for the older child. Research shows that children who grow up to be most responsible and mature and most socially competent, tend to have caregivers who provide a context of warm relationships; they are caregivers who have consistent standards, ones who negotiate with children concerning these standards, and use explanations and reasoning when disciplining children. These caregivers generally display what is called an authoritative child rearing style.

What qualities of the parent or nanny or other caregiver reflect an authoritative caregiving style and will facilitate optimum development in the child? I will delineate five such qualities which include:

•Realness or genuineness in the caregiver. Authenticity is an essential ingredient of standing in relationship with a child or a person of any age. Children know when adults are incongruent or preach one thing and act otherwise. Young children are confused when adults act incongruently whereas older children exposed to it, learn to be inauthentic like their caregivers.

•Consistency. Children experience a sense of security when they know what they can expect from caregivers, not only in the way of schedules and routines, but typical responses to situations. Unpredictable or erratic responses can breed fear, anxiety and resentment. Consistency does not, however, imply rigidity or inflexibility, but rather a relaxed and yet mindful spontaneity.

•Reasonableness, or not expecting too much or too little of children. This implies knowing what can reasonably be expected of children at each developmental stage in the areas of physical, motor, social, intellectual, emotional development, and combining that with real awareness and sensitivitiy to the individual child that one is dealing with. Reasonableness also implies that the adult really observes and listens to children and then acts with knowledge and understanding of a child's needs, desires, and intuits what is best for that child in that particular situation.

•Warmth--really liking children and one's charge, in particular. It implies being accepting and approving, and truly caring for and about the child. It does not, on the other hand, imply being permissive and indulgent.

•Empathy, or the ability to feel as another person feels. It implies that one can stand in the child's shoes and see the world through the child's eyes. There will be a

corresponding ability to understand why the child responds as he/she does, and feels, as he or she does.

•Trustful confidence that children want to do right and be right, want to grow in healthful ways, and respond to what is genuinely expected of them by people who are significant in their lives. Adult behavior that is spawned by a distrust of human nature will tend to cram children with information of adult choosing and circumscribe or restrict child behavior for fear that the child follow some mistaken path.

What goals for children do you have as a nanny? Don't be lost in trying to be the perfect nanny. You will lose sight of the child's needs if you are an adult who is preoccupied with being the best caregiver. You may even become calculating and manipulative if your primary focus is on satisfying your own ego needs. Your vision should be to serve the child's best interests, to promote the child's well being, to faciltate the child's progress and growth. If you achieve these end results for children, you will, in fact, be a superlative nanny.

•Growth of independence and competence. So avoid overteaching, overhelping, and overtalking. Many caregivers see their role as one involving doing to and for children, but allowing children to do for themselves what they can do, increases their self-esteem.

•Developing the whole child--facilitating physical, motor, intellectual, social and emotional development. There is no area of child behavior and personality that will not, for better or worse, be impacted or shaped by a caregiver. "Fast track", image conscious parents often emphasize the child's intellectual and academic achievements to the exclusion of social and emotional attainments.

•Helping children to interiorze self-control or developing what psychologist Carl Rogers called an inner locus of evaluation. This starts with an external process of adults setting and maintaining limits and giving reasons for rules and expectations. But, children need to be given the opportunity to make decisions, exercise choice, solve problems, as they are able to do these things. Research shows that the growth of conscience or moral judgment and action is facilitated by the presence of warm, nurturing relationships between child and adult, by adults who use reason-giving techniqes, by adults who set few but firm rules, and are consistent in enforcing these. When punishment is necessary, such an adult makes sure that it fits the transgression/"crime." Developing an inner locus of evaluation will help a child

adhere to internalized values, rather than tend to "run with the crowd," or be easily swayed by the peer group.

•Developing prosocial qualities such as mutual trust, kindness, cooperation, social responsibility are not learned by talking about them. They can only be learned from being in relationship with others, and especially with sensitive, caring adults; these are traits learned from other human beings who actively display these qualities, value them, and work at developing them in children. We know that the transmission of values, attitudes, beliefs that shape behavior is achieved when a child engages in an interactive process with a personally valued caregiver.

•Creating children who are happy and confident, and who experience feelings of self worth. An oppressive, and repressive caregiving environment will only spawn resentment, rebelliousness, hostile feelings or anxiety and self-doubt.

Childhood is a magical time! Children are thirsting to know about their world. They want to know why things are the way they are. How things work. They are soaking up information, and spontaneously synthesizing information, acquiring a language, learning "what makes people tick". For better or for worse, they are learning at a rate that will never again be equalled in their lives. The caregiver who can help preserve the magic and wonder of childhood while still assisting the child in growth toward adulthood is doing the best job of socialization. Hopefully, the child never learns from a caregiver that there is no place for his or her exuberance, that one must always conform and submit to adult authority. That it is not safe to differ from the nanny. That it is "okay" to break the rules as long as you don't get caught. That some people are impersonal and uncaring, and they don't look at or listen too closely to what others do, except for when rules are broken.

Nannies also need to be sensitive to the family's expectations and values, and not work at cross purposes with them so that children get clear, coherent messages from all important adults in their lives. However, they do not have to aspire to being carbon copies of the child's parents. Children grow and learn from dealing with different personalites.

To <u>parents</u> I would like to address the following thoughts. Choose your nanny carefully. Authentic caregiving is a passionate profession which can make a difference in the lives of children. Be willing to share your child with this person. Don't feel you have to compete with the nanny for the child's attention. If the child appears to be

bonding emotionally with the nanny, be thankful that this is so. In our society today, with our shrinking family size, children are exposed to very limited and exclusive relationships. Parents, especially working parents, often feel guilty about not spending enough time with their children. furthermore, they often resent the child's forming attachments with other caregivers. There is an African proverb that says, "It takes a whole village to raise a child." We should be willing as parents to share our childrens' affections with other significant caregivers. These relationships will not dilute the parent-child relationship. And, they will strengthen the child's ability to invest emotionally in people.

Also for parents, communicate openly about your values, beliefs, and expectations for the child and attempt to determine whether the person under consideration as your child's nanny shares most of them. If a nanny is at odds with parental values and practices, it creates a conflict and dilemma that a child has to resolve. One way the resolution may come about is that the child behaves differently when with one caregiver than when with another--espousing a shifting set of values and behavior rather than a consistent and firmly interiorized one. This has implications for moral development. Rather than internalizing a set of values and beliefs that says one does or does not do something, a child may in fact decide that behaviors, even incompatible behaviors, are situational. This does not bode well for the future when the child must choose options for valuing and behavior in the absence of authority figures.

Parents also need to welcome the nanny into the family, as a respected and valuable professional and important member of the household so as to empower and confer credibility on the nanny as an authority figure and as a parent surrogate.

To agency owners--you are forging an important connection or linkage between people. You are serving three constituencies--parents who need the services of a nanny, children who have not spoken directly or cannot ask for what they want or need, and of course, nannies who are seeking placements. You have to select the best parent surrogates, the best teachers, the most able and sensitive socializers of children that you can find. You have to help educate parents and society at large on the role of the professional nanny. You have to be advocates for children. You have to recognize that every child is society's child, and therefore yours is a very personal and significant responsibility. You are creating a network, a matrix, against which important and powerful relationships are going to be played out. You have a special

job to do of matchmaking--matching the special needs of families and children to nannies.

To nanny educators I would like to say that you are the keepers of professional standards. You too have a special responsbility to edcuate society at large as to the role of the professional nanny. And, your traning programs for potential nannies have to uphold rigorous standards for professional and ethical practice. You will not just train extraordinary caregivers but will create expectations in parents that they will find highly skilled and effective nannies.

I would like to offer a quote from an unknown author that would apply to all of us whose work impacts the lives of children:

"A hundred years from now it will not matter what my bank account was, the sort of house I lived in, or the kind of car I drove. But, the world may be different because I was important in the life of a child".

Think of the possibilties of action for all of us inherent in what I have just said!

We each can make a difference in our childrens' lives, not just for today, but for far into a future we will never see. I am told that all human beings have a need to leave their permanent mark. This is one reason why some of us write books, or paint pictures, or even lead armies. Well, each of us has a chance to do just that--leave an indelible mark on humanity-- if our lives in any way intersect with those of children.

Right now, our society is deeply and dangerously divided--along social class, political, religious, racial and ethnic lines. We all need to find ways to heal the splits and ruptures in the social fabric and create a more cohesive social unit. Perhaps we can accomplish this end through our own personal, individual efforts, in quiet but powerful ways as we deal with the children in our care. Not waiting on our government and elected officials to do it for us.

Recalling the prayer of St. Francis of Assisi, perhaps we can accomplish this in our own homes and in our own families by sowing the seeds of peace, practicing love and forgiveness, and bringing optimism, hope, joy and light into the lives of children. And so dispelling hatred, doubt, despair and loneliness.

Perhaps each of us can be like a pebble dropped into the pond of humanity, creating ever enlarging concentric circles of ripples that extend out to far shores, as we touch the future positively through our children and their children. Since each of us will leave a wake as we pass through life, let us hope that effect is profoundly good, that

the ripples that we create will intersect, merge, magnify and have even stronger effects on distant shores even as they resonate through every molecule of water in that pond. Let us hope that all of us here, parents, nannies, and agency owners and educators, can pledge to touch and make a difference in the lives of untold, unseen future generations.

Thank you.